

## HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last month, I stood here and told everyone about a young woman from Nevada named Alysia. She was born with a kidney disease, one she fought bravely her entire life. But lately things have gotten worse. Similar to far too many Americans in recent months, Alysia lost her job. That has happened to far too many Americans. When you lose your job, as we have learned, your health care often disappears also.

Alysia did what any of us would do in the same situation, she tried to get independent coverage so she could afford the surgery she needs to get better. Her doctors say surgery is imperative, but insurance companies say: No, you can't get insurance. They refused to cover her. They call her kidney disease a preexisting condition—everyone else, including Alysia, calls it a tragedy.

She is not the only Nevadan who has written me about injustice. Caleb Wolz is a high school student from Sparks, NV. Similar to so many kids, he used to play, when he was younger, all kinds of games. But now he just sticks to skiing and rock climbing. You can forgive him for not playing some of the games he doesn't play anymore. He was born without any legs. Caleb was born without legs.

As kids grow, they grow out of their shoes. A lot of kids probably get a new pair every year. But Caleb, who is now 17, has needed a new pair of prosthetic legs every year since he was 5 years old.

You can probably guess what the story is now, and you have it right. His insurance company has decided it knows better than his physicians and has decided that Caleb does not need legs that work and fit. Even after looking at pictures of the bruises and abrasions Caleb suffered from the prosthetics that didn't fit, his insurance company decided, once again, his preexisting condition is too expensive to deal with.

These stories are hard to hear, but they are not hard to come by. They are extraordinary, but they are not unique. This happens to women all over southern Nevada just like Alysia and boys across northern Nevada just like Caleb. It happens to people on the east coast and the west coast. It happens to Americans in small towns and big cities. Every day, insurance companies look at a patient's medical history and the prescriptions they have filled. Then they deny them coverage or charge them exorbitant rates because of the patient's age or a specific illness. For every 10 patients who try to get health care, 9 of them never buy a plan because insurance companies deny them or make it too expensive.

Most of us were not born with a kidney disease such as Alysia's or, unlike Caleb, we are born with both our legs. But unless you are in absolutely perfect health, without a history of anything from heart disease to high cho-

lesterol or hay fever, in the insurance world you are out of luck. Some insurance companies even treat Caesarean sections as a preexisting condition, and some accuse women of scheduling unnecessary C-sections when they give birth. More than half of all Americans live with at least one chronic condition, and those conditions cause 70 percent of the deaths in America. Yet right now, insurance companies that care more about profits than about people are in complete control of their well-being. They are holding Americans hostage, and far too many of us cannot afford that ransom.

Reforming health care is a complex endeavor, but one part of the Democrats' vision for health care is simple. We are going to give people control over their own health. We are no longer going to let greedy insurance companies use a patient's preexisting condition as an excuse to deny them the care they need.

We will lower the high cost of health care. We will lower the cost of health care generally. We will make sure every American has access to that quality, affordable care, and we will do our very best to make sure people still have the power to choose their own doctors, hospitals, and health plans.

If we leave it to private insurance companies that are more interested in keeping their profits up than keeping us healthy, that will not happen, nor will it happen if our Republican colleagues continue to defend the status quo. A few weeks ago, the Republican leader in the House of Representatives said the following:

I think we all understand that we have the best health care system in the world.

How can one defend a health care system that goes out of its way not to care for people's health? And how can anyone celebrate such a system with a straight face? That health care system told Alysia she can't get the kidney surgery she needs. That health care system told Caleb he can't get the legs he needs. I think they would respectfully disagree with the Republican leader.

Insurance companies and most of our Republican colleagues seem to share a common philosophy. They both reflexively and recklessly say no for no good reason. That is a philosophy we cannot afford in America. If you are fortunate enough to have coverage you like, you can keep it. But if you don't like the fact that the insurance company can deny you coverage when they feel like it, you will agree we need to change the way things are.

## RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

## MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there

will now be a period for morning business for up to 1 hour, with time equally divided or controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

## ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Arizona and I be permitted to engage in a colloquy for up to 20 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Will the Chair please let me know when 2 minutes remains.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will do so.

## HEALTH CARE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I heard the majority leader talk about denying care, and that is the issue before us—one of the major issues. The vision of the Republicans is that there will not be someone in between a patient and a doctor who would get in the way of a treatment you need or the care you need or have you stand in line or wait too long. Our great fear is the Democratic proposal so far, in which we have not had a chance to participate, would put the government between you and the doctor and the government doing the rationing.

Republican proposals, such as those of Senator GREGG and Senator BURR and Senator COBURN and even the bipartisan proposal by Senator WYDEN, a Democrat, and Senator BENNETT, a Republican—of which I am a cosponsor of all—envision a system where those of us, the 250 million of us who already have health care insurance, would be permitted to keep it and that we would find a way to reform the Tax Code to give to individuals who do not have good health care the money they need to buy the health care and to choose it for themselves. Our concern is, the Government might become too much involved, and we might create a program that is filled with more debt, on top of the debt we already have, that our children and grandchildren simply couldn't afford it.

Mr. MCCAIN, the Senator from Arizona, has been, I guess, in more town meetings about health care than any other American, at least any other American who serves today in the Senate. He was in Texas last week and home last week in Phoenix, at some of our leading institutions, to hear what people had to say about it.

I wonder if I could ask the Senator from Arizona if he heard concern from those in his home State of Arizona, or those at M.D. Anderson in Texas, about